

W5YI

America's Oldest Ham Radio Newsletter REPORT

Up to the minute news from the world of amateur radio, personal computing and emerging electronics. While no guarantee is made, information is from sources we believe to be reliable.

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FCC Proposes to increase Vanity Call Sign Fees

Up until May 31, 1996, it was not possible for radioamateurs to receive a station call sign of their choice. The campaign to obtain a station call sign of choice began in June 1990 when a retired Extra Class amateur from Tyler, Texas, Jim Wills, N5HCT filed a *Petition for Rule Making*. He wanted his old WA5EHQ call sign restored.

Wills suggested that amateurs be allowed to specify three call sign choices in order of preference and attach a \$30.00 fee payable to the FCC requesting a call sign change. The petition was denied because of the statutory exemption of amateur service applications from fees.

But that did not stop Wills. He began writing his Congressmen concerning the reassignment of unused dormant call signs. On December 9, 1991, Congressman Ralph Hall wrote Wills back saying "I've shared your idea with the staff of the Telecommunications Subcommittee, and they are currently conducting an inquiry in conjunction with the FCC to determine whether such a fee would collect enough money to pay for itself. If so, we may be able to make the necessary legislative changes in the FCC reauthorization bill to put such a 'vanity call sign fee' into effect."

On June 12, 1992, a letter, jointly signed by Congressmen Edward J. Markey (D-Mass) and Ralph M. Hall (D-Texas) was sent to the FCC Chairman. It said "We are writing to you on behalf of several amateur radio operators who are interested in the establishment of an FCC system for allotting distinctive call signs. Such call signs would be

available at a fee to radio operators, in order to recover the total cost associated with the program." The addition of House Telecommunications Subcommittee chairman Markey's signature to the letter added renewed importance to the proposal! Ed Markey controlled the FCC budget.

This was all happening at a time when a system was being developed to have the FCC's budget basically paid for by the various beneficiaries of their services. Under President Clinton's well publicized *Deficit Reduction Plan*, a new Section 9(a) would be added to the Communications Act. It would authorize the Commission to collect annual regulatory fees to recover the annual costs of its enforcement, policy and rulemaking, user information, and international activities.

Both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate approved legislation authorizing the new Section 9(a) and a beginning *Schedule of Regulatory Fees* was established. Even the commission was not aware of the short four-word line added to the *Schedule of Regulatory Fees* at the last minute. It simply read: "Amateur vanity call signs \$7." Thus the issuance of vanity call signs for radioamateurs became one of the many services for which the FCC would be reimbursed.

Clinton signed the *Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act* (the official name of the *Deficit Reduction Plan*) into law on Tuesday, August 10, 1993, and with it, the provision for Vanity call signs became law (Public Law 103-66).

It also came as a complete surprise to the

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ARRL and the amateur community who, except for Jim Wills, N5HCT, were not involved in its enactment.

The special call sign program still had to go through FCC rule making before it could be implemented by the Private Radio Bureau. The FCC's version of vanity call signs was proposed on December 13, 1993. PR Docket 93-305 provided for allowing amateur radio operators to select up to ten unassigned "Vanity" station call sign in order of preference.

The FCC envisioned that a ham station call sign would become available for reassignment after two years following license expiration or the death of a licensee ...whichever is sooner. And all Vanity call signs would become available on a first come - first serve basis.

The call signs selected had to be within the framework of the sequential call sign system wherein certain groups of call signs are designated for each class of operator license. In other words, a Novice could not choose an available Group 'A' Amateur Extra call sign. Amateurs relinquished their current call sign when a chosen 'vanity' call sign is assigned. Certain prefixes were available only for amateurs having mailing addresses outside of the continental (lower 48) states. In its comments, the ARRL asked for a one time \$150.00 application fee.

A year later (December 23, 1994) the FCC Commissioners adopted final rules implementing vanity call signs in the Amateur Service pretty much as proposed. The ARRL's suggested method to open the system gradually through four (later changed to five) 'starting gates' was approved.

One point that the FCC did not go along with was ARRL's request that an applicant only be permitted to request those call signs that are assignable to stations in the call sign region in which the licensee has a mailing address. The Commission also elected to impose a two year waiting period before a vacated call sign could be reassigned.

On June 14, 1995, the FCC adopted a revised Schedule of Regulatory Fees for Fiscal Year (FY) 1995. Section 9 requires that fees take into account the benefits provided to the user and the cost to provide them. The fee, which is reviewed and adjusted annually, also takes into consideration the total amount of funding that the FCC needs for its upcoming fiscal year.

Accordingly, effective September 19, 1995, the annual Regulatory Fee for Vanity call signs was reduced to \$3.00 instead of the initially suggested \$7.00. The ten year term fee came to \$30.00 ...the same as originally requested by Texas amateur Jim Wills.

Payment for a Vanity call sign had to be submitted with a special FCC Form 610-V application and "...shall include an advance payment of the total annual regulatory fee payment due for the entire term of the license...."

But there was no guarantee that Amateur Vanity Call Signs would remain at the \$30.00 level for a ten year term ...and they did not. The rules provide for adjusting regulatory fees annually and the fee was increased to

\$50.00 effective September 15, 1997.

Gate One of the Vanity call sign program opened to prior holders of a call sign and close relatives of deceased prior holders on May 31, 1996. By the way, Jim Wills, N5HCT was issued the vanity call sign of W5JIM on November 4, 1996.

Complete details on the Vanity call sign system can be found on the Amateur pages of the FCC's website at: <<http://wireless.fcc.gov/services/amateur/licensing/vanity.html>>

New vanity call sign fee proposed

For the year ending September 15, 2003, the (ten year term) regulatory fee for a vanity call sign is \$14.30 ...or \$1.43 annually. For the year beginning in September 2003, the FCC proposed in a March 24th *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* to increase it to \$16.30. The NPPM, entitled "Assessment and Collection of Regulatory Fees for Fiscal Year 2003" (MD Docket No. 03-83), anticipates that 9800 applicants will apply for vanity call signs in FY2003. That's up by 800 from FY2002.

In total, Congress has required that the FCC recover \$269 million in FY2003 which begins October 1, 2003, an increase of 23 percent over the \$218,757,000 it was required to collect for FY2002. The FCC said "Each fee category has been adjusted upward by 23 percent to reflect the increase in regulatory fees from FY2002 to FY-2003." The FCC expects to collect nearly \$160,000 from vanity call signs in FY2003, an increase of almost \$30,000 (exactly 23 percent) from FY2002.

The amateur community seems to be confused as to how the increase in Vanity Call Sign fees is calculated. This year it is merely a case that the entire FCC needs more total funding and the Amateur Service, like all other services must pay their share of the increase.

The closing date for comments on the new fee schedule is April 25. Reply comments are due by May 5. Interested parties may comment online via the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) on the web at <www.fcc.gov/cgb/ecfs>. Click on "Submit a Filing" and enter "03-83" in the "Proceeding" field on the next screen.

Follows is a sample of the comments filed:

"While the cost may be \$14.50 now, who is to say that cost could not climb into the hundreds of dollars -- or more -- by the time that amateur nears the end of their radio-active avocation. Perhaps the time now is to lock in a higher fee that will hold in place for a 10-year period. If a \$20 fee were to be implemented now, it could remain in place for 10, or better yet, 11 years, to ensure the next 10 years of a new renewal will be at the same \$20 rate for one more term. Perhaps the FCC should consider a lifetime fee for amateur vanity call signs. The commission could collect an upfront \$100 fee that would lock in that vanity use for life." [Chuck Gysi, N2DUP, Rochester MN]

"Presently the vanity fee is also applicable to renewals. Most Amateur Radio operators believe and expect that

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the FCC's costs with respect to the vanity service are or should be incurred at the time of awarding the vanity grant. I believe the vanity call sign application fee should be adjusted (increased if necessary) to reflect all costs associated with the vanity call sign application process, and renewals should be free." *[Dean K. Gibson, AC7XW, Mill Creek, WA]*

"I think that the cost of the vanity call processing should reflect the cost to handle it. So if it costs \$300 to process, the requester should pay that amount. Now if it is that costly, the FCC should control cost by using another format to handle it. A volunteer organization could handle these. This should not turn into a profit based process." *[Thomas Powell, K4TNP, Milledgeville, GA]*

"I don't mind the FCC's requirement to pay for obtaining a Vanity call sign, but to charge for renewal is outrageous. The FCC should reconsider the renewal fee for Vanity calls." *[Frank A. Todd, IV, K3EKO, Port Vue, PA]*

"There should be no fee assigned to any amateur license. Amateurs serve the public on a no-charge basis. Any fee for an amateur license is an outrage and insult. An amateur license should be granted for life and at no charge. The attempts to increase fees is only a cover up of poor service by the FCC to the unpaid amateur community." *[John T. "Tad" Burik, K3QC, Fort Myers, FL]*

"I see no reason for any charge for renewing a vanity call sign. Once the Commission issues such a call sign, it ought to be treated as any other call sign; the fact that it was requested becomes immaterial. Renewing a vanity call sign should be as automatic as any other call sign. If other call signs continue to be renewed without charge, then so should a 'vanity' call sign. *[Paul M. Farrar, KZ5HAM, Canby, OR]*

"Neither the present fee of \$14.50 nor the proposed fee of \$16.30 is particularly burdensome on the individuals concerned, and the general regulatory scheme with respect to new applications is fair and reasonable. What is not fair and reasonable is the proposal to charge a fee for renewals of already issued vanity calls. It is the policy of the FCC to issue sequential call signs and renewals thereof free of charge. I submit that there is no difference in the administrative burden or cost to the FCC for routinely processing a renewal for an already issued license simply because the original grant was under the vanity system." *[James A. Cour, K1ZC, Highland Park, IL]*

"It is the suggestion of this license holder that the license fee be set at \$100 (one hundred dollars) to enhance revenues for rules enforcement purposes." *[James Bridge, K7LA, Cypress, CA]*

"Instead of raising the fee for Vanity Call Signs from \$14.50 to \$16.30. I would rather you raise the fee to \$20.00 and place a 10 year moratorium freezing it at that level!" *[Daniel J. Berry, KD7MKF, Seattle, WA]*

"Maybe a fee for new vanity applications can be justified somehow but renewals are only a key stroke away and

should not be an expense item." *[Ralph O. Howes Jr., W8BVH, Lancaster, OH]*

"The vanity call sign fee is not a fee at all. Rather, it is a tax, except for a small part of the first time application. You should not be singling out for taxation persons who provide a public service at their own expense." *[Kenneth Cooperstein, KC2JDY, Centerport, NY]*

"I am against any raising of the vanity call sign fee, it is high enough! I do not see why it needs to be raised." *[Charles P. Adkins, K8CPA, Lincoln Park, MI]*

"I can not justify the cost when I can renew my present call sign at no expense. If they believe that they need additional monies to process and renew Vanity Call Signs, then maybe it is time for another organization to issue and renew amateur licenses, such as the ARRL." *[James B. Stafford, KC5SVI, Benbrook, TX]*

"I do not understand why there is a fee to renew a vanity call sign. It should not cost anymore to look up the information on a vanity call sign than it costs to look up an assigned call sign. I do support a higher fee for the original process, but not renewal." *[Allan Kruger, W7ZK, Eagar, AZ]*

"Vanity fees were just raised. Enough is enough! Tell our President to stop wasting our dollars on pork and support the FCC." *[Marc Colton, K2WEB, Rockaway, NJ]*

"I strongly suggest you provide only a one time fee for vanity amateur radio licenses and make it large enough to cover your real processing costs. We live in a world of too many hidden taxes used to fund anything but the actual activity related to the specific tax." *[Ira A. Wilner, W1IRA, Putney, VT]*

"Given that the Amateur Radio vanity call sign program is entirely an elective process, quite aside from basic licensing, a fee that is representative of the Commission's actual cost-to-process, is wholly warranted." *[Doran S. Platt III, K3HVG, Monrovia, MD]*

"I have no problem with the FCC charging an increased fee for new vanity call sign filings. However, once a vanity call is assigned, renewing it is no more time consuming or costly than renewing any other call sign." *[Ralph D'Andrea, K0RFD, Grand Junction, CO]*

"I had no problem paying the application fee, however I feel the renewal fee is absurd. I do not believe for one second there is more expense in managing a vanity call sign versus a sequentially issued call sign." *[Jay Urich, W5GM, Flower Mound, TX]*

"Currently the FCC charges the full fee even if the FCC does not grant the call sign. Applicants who are not successful in obtaining a Vanity call sign may seek a refund of the application fee, by writing to the FCC. The FCC should not require an applicant to have to write the FCC to request the refund. The FCC should not charge the full fee if the license is not granted." *[Kevin Hemsley, NF7J, Idaho Falls, ID]*

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CUTTING EDGE TECHNOLOGY

The FCC's Media Bureau reports that the Notice of Proposed Rule Making on digital broadcast copy protection issued last August has received more than 6000 comments, mostly from individual citizens. The comment period closed on February 18th.

In late 2001 an inter-industry Copy Protection Technical Working Group and its broadcast subgroup attempted to develop a technical solution to preclude retransmission of digital video programming over the Internet, specifically focusing on the possibility of a "broadcast flag."

In its final report issued last June, the committee offered no clear consensus as how to proceed. That led to the FCC's NPRM a couple of months later.

Unlike analog programming, digital content doesn't degrade when copied, meaning the 100th copy is as good as the original. The broadcast flag is an electronic marker embedded in digital programming that effectively prevents or limits copying and subsequent redistribution of pirated broadcasts over the Internet.

The FCC is keeping an open mind on the broadcast flag issue although the NPRM made no such proposals. Instead the issues were laid out in a neutral manner as if the problem never existed.

At issue is whether content producers will continue to provide the terrestrial networks with high value HDTV content if a method of stopping copying of such material is not built into DTV receivers. It is the FCC's view that DBS and cable TV gateways into the home are somehow inherently less vulnerable than over-the-air television.

Video programmers fear the "napsterization" of broadcast television content via recorded digital content uploaded onto the Internet. The FCC said it is concerned about the impact the flag would have on consumers, both on their ability to make copies of broadcast television content and on the technology in the home.

CBS television has said if there is no broadcast flag implemented by this summer, they would pull all HDTV programming from their schedule starting this fall, until the issue is resolved. It would be a setback for HDTV since CBS offers the most HD programming of any network.

And the major movie studios say they

won't license high-quality programming to television networks for fear the programming will be pirated. They want a law or FCC rule that requires televisions sold after a certain date to recognize the flag. Consumer groups generally say the broadcast flag is unnecessary and unwise.

Congress has expressed concern that copy-protection rules should not be set by the FCC instead by the Congressional committee which has jurisdiction over the Copyright Act.

Copyright owners are, by law, deemed to consent to "fair use" of their works by others. According to the Copyright Act, what is considered "fair" is the use of the copyrighted work for criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research.

The U.S. Supreme Court already has ruled that recording free television programs for later viewing was a "fair use."

EMERGING COMMUNICATIONS

South Korea leads the world in wireless technology and boasts broadband penetration to some 70% of households ...nearly three times the penetration of U.S. households.

Broadband of the sort South Korea deploys for \$33 per month runs at a pace of eight megabits per second ...about eight to ten times faster than our DSL and cable modems.

Average South Korean service is fast enough to stream high resolution HDTV images onto a computer screen. "By Asian standards, the U.S. has virtually no residential broadband at all." [Source: *Wall Street Journal*]

Nationwide, the number of U.S. households with broadband has jumped from 5.2 million in 2000 to 10.4 million in 2001, and reached 15.4 million in 2002, according to Jupiter Research.

Research firm Strategy Analytics estimates that 27 percent of all U.S. Internet homes presently use broadband connections, with expectations of more than 70 percent by 2008 -- that's approximately 64 million subscribers or 59 percent of all U.S. homes.

According to market-research firm, Gartner, the number of wireless LAN users in North America is

poised to grow sevenfold from 4.2 million in 2003 to more than 31 million in 2007. "By the end of 2003, wireless users will be able to virtually 'plug in' at 20,000 public WLAN 'hot-spots' worldwide ...and 120,000 locations by 2007."

For the moment, deploying Wi-Fi 802.11b-compliant wireless gear is the smart move for businesses. 802.11b delivers a relatively narrow 11-Mbps pipeline to the Internet which "...will be the technology of choice for 'hot-spot' frequenters," Gartner said.

"Two other standards, 802.11a and 802.11g, offer bigger bandwidth -- up to 54 Mbps -- and eventually will supplant Wi-Fi." They should not be implemented "...until all related security, frequency, and roaming standards have been ratified [which is] expected during 2003."

Of the 106 million homes with TV in the U.S., less than 2% have sprung for HDTV sets, says the Consumer Electronics Association.

The CEA reports its manufacturers have sold 5 million digital TVs (representing an \$8.6 billion market investment) since their introduction in 1997, a fraction of the 24 million old-fashioned analog sets the industry sells each year.

And of those, only 1 in 15 households actually bothers to buy the antenna or satellite dish and a separate tuner to receive high-definition broadcasts, according to Forrester Research in Cambridge, Mass.

Satellite broadcasters, DirecTV and EchoStar's DishNetwork have offered Showtime, HBO and high-definition sports programming for more than two years. Even so, fewer than 3 percent of the 19.8 million satellite subscribers receive high-definition broadcasts.

An even smaller number of cable subscribers - people in the broadcast industry put the number at 50,000 - receive HDTV programming even though the National Cable and Telecommunications Association says 43 million American households could now theoretically access it.

HD set sales are expected to nearly double to 4 million this year, according to CEA research. By 2006 that number is expected to grow to 10.5 million. (Digest from *Business Week*, *San Jose Mercury* and *Scripps Howard News Service*)

By year end, U.S. consumers will be able to change wireless companies and retain their old cell

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phone number.

The FCC's WNP (wireless number portability) mandate allows customers to change their telecommunications service provider while keeping their existing telephone number.

Everyone will be able to have a lifetime cell phone number. Instead of calling a place, people will be able to call the person where ever they are. It also means consumers will face less of an obstacle when moving to cheaper service plans or switching services if they're not happy with their current provider.

A "tidal wave" of demand is expected and "churn" (customers switching to new carriers) could skyrocket to 50 percent or more. That's a lot of churn when you figure there are about 144 million mobile telephone subscribers in the United States!

Wireless operators continue to protest the rule and industry group Cellular Telecommunications & Internet Association (CTIA) is taking the matter to court.

FCC Chairman Michael Powell has already extended the deadline once, but plans to stay with the Nov 24th, 2003 deadline.

COMPUTERS & SOFTWARE

The inventor of the world's first portable computer died March 18. Introduced at the West Coast Computer Faire in June 1981, Adam Osborne's first portable computer weighed 24 pounds, had a cramped 5-inch screen and came with its own suitcase carrier.

More than 110,000 were sold in 1982. The company went bankrupt in 1983 after encountering manufacturing, competition and inventory problems.

Born in Thailand to a British father and Polish mother, Osborne was raised in southern India. Educated in England and the U.S., Osborne held a doctorate degree in chemical engineering from the University of Delaware.

In the mid-1970's, while working for Shell Oil in California, he became a computer hobbyist and a self-published writer. In 1979, he sold his small publishing company to McGraw-Hill and used the money along with venture capital to found Osborne Computer in 1980.

He was buried at a local cemetery near his southern Indian home, where he

had lived since 1993. He was 64.

Airline travelers flying into London's Heathrow Airport will find the Internet waiting for them.

The airport just opened a Wi-Fi "hot spot" allowing people with laptop computers to access the Internet and e-mails.

Progress usually means "better", "faster" and "cheaper." The Pony Express began on April 3, 1860. For only \$5.00, people could get an ounce of mail delivered across the country, guaranteed in 10 days. It lasted only sixteen months, put out of business by the telegraph. Today, the bulk of all letters go by instantaneous e-mail and it's basically free.

GADGETS & GIZMOS

T-Mobile USA is now offering customers the ability to send 10-second full motion video clips with sound. The feature is initially available through the Nokia 3650 phone (\$199 after a \$100 rebate.) You simply record the audio and video clip on the wireless camcorder phone and then send it as an e-mail attachment. Cost is \$3 a month for 10 video (or 30 audio) messages. Additional video messages are 30 cents each.

The refrigerator is an unconventional device for consumers to consider as a focal point of the networked home. But two Korean companies believe the kitchen refrigerator is destined to become just that "...since it's the only appliance on 24 hours a day."

Today, 8 percent of U.S. households have a home network. These 8.5 million households connect multiple PCs to share an Internet connection and content. The typical PC-centric home network is generally segregated from consumer electronics devices and home appliances.

A survey by the Yankee Group revealed that 38 percent of consumers are interested in using a wireless device to connect to the Internet and to control family schedules, home security, lighting, heating and cooling from a portable touch screen. The Internet-enabled refrigerator already has some of these functions and could develop into the home control device of the future.

LG Electronics' home network hub is

a 26-cubic-foot "Multi-Media Refrigerator," featuring a 15-inch flat touch screen display. Using the fridge's screen and an Internet connection, customers can view e-mail, download digital music, watch television, leave video messages for family members and keep track of dates and appointments. It also keeps an inventory of groceries on its shelves, stores nutritional information and can download recipes.

A new version of the appliance is able to scan bar codes on packaged foods as they enter the unit, or are tossed away, simplifying the chore of making up a grocery list.

Samsung, another Korean electronic company, has launched the HomePAD Internet refrigerator. It is similar to LG's product, except that the 12-inch display pad is detachable and able to communicate wirelessly with the fridge.

In addition to storing food, consumers can send and receive e-mail, surf the Net and watch a favorite DVD by using the Internet refrigerator's touch screen control panel, which also serves as a detachable handheld computer. A future version will have the ability to determine when a home is out of specific items.

The Samsung and LG models of the Internet-enabled refrigerator are similar in form and function. Both models have a tablet PC, require a broadband connection and cost is around \$8,000. The tablet PC is equipped with audio speakers, an embedded digital camera, and output ports to display content from various networked devices.

Not to be outdone, Japan's Panasonic is teaming up with Hitachi to develop a similar refrigerator that will be available next year.

Target customers for Internet refrigerators are a family of four or more with an annual income of more than \$100,000.

INTERNET & WORLD WIDE WEB

America OnLine is losing dial-up Internet subscribers to high speed broadband. Its advertising revenues are declining and AOL has been charged by the SEC with irregular accounting practices and may have to restate its revenues for the past two years by up to \$400 million.

During the fourth quarter AOL lost 176,000 narrowband subscribers but still

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remains the undisputed Internet access leader with more than 35 million subscribers — more than four times its nearest competitor, MSN. Where AOL falters, is that less than seven percent of AOL subscribers have a high speed connection. And those that do, most don't get it from AOL.

AOL charges \$54.95 for high speed cable modem broadband access ...available only to AOL customers who have Time Warner Cable which only serves 18% of U.S. cable households. AOL also offers DSL (phone-based) broadband at the same price.

AT&T broadband (now merged with Comcast) is cheaper: only \$45.95 a month ...and MSN-DSL is \$39.95. Cox Communications gives \$10-\$15 monthly discounts to modem owners. (CompUSA and Amazon.com both sell cable modems for under \$100.00.)

Broadband subscribers who get their high speed access elsewhere can get "exclusive" AOL content for \$14.95 a month ...current AOL subscribers get charged \$9.95. And 2 million AOL customers do exactly that. (It hardly seems worth it to us when you can get Yahoo! content free!)

AOL has now hired a new advertising agency and earmarked \$35 million for a new broadband advertising campaign. BBDO Worldwide New York's first TV ad (aired during the Academy Awards) featured sexy actress Sharon Stone (in bed with AOL's running man character) and a new tagline "Welcome to the World Wide Wow."

Yahoo has redesigned its search engine. Cosmetic changes now make it look more like Google. Yahoo began using the new Google Internet search engine in 1999. Today, Google is the No. 1 search engine.

Yahoo now is introducing a series of improvements to its own Web search service, an attempt to reclaim more surfers to its own search engine. Sponsored search has proved to be profitable and Yahoo has removed large ads and replaced them, with small clutter-free text ads.

Yahoo is also including information not offered by Google. Searches (for maps, yellow pages, weather, news and dictionary definitions) return answers more quickly than ever before. For example, typing in an address will produce a map of the location within the search results page in addition to Web results re-

lated to that area.

Yahoo recently acquired Inktomi (for \$235 million) which has an index of billions of Web pages.

Sponsored advertising links are coming to Amazon.com. Google is in the process of providing additional related links when a person views a particular Amazon product page. The links, which will pop up in a new window, will appear as lists of other things that customers might be interested in. Amazon gets a cut of the advertising revenue.

According to the U.S. Commerce Dept., online retail sales during 2001, grew 22 percent while total retail sales grew only 3 percent.

The travel reservation industry generated nearly one-fourth of its total revenue online during 2001.

Non-store retailers -- businesses ranging from television shopping networks to Internet shopping sites -- accounted for 75 percent (\$26 billion) of online retail sales. [From: "E-Stats" released: March 19, 2003.]

WASHINGTON WHISPERS

The U.S. military, the Bush administration and the Cellular Telecommunications and Internet Association (CTIA) have endorsed a novel plan that would have the cost of relocating federal agencies to new spectrum paid for by the wireless industry.

The government already has identified the 1710-1755 MHz and the 2110-2155 MHz band — much of which is currently allocated to the military — for relocation to the private sector.

The Defense Department -- which would prefer to retain the radio frequencies they have — said they need the spectrum for such uses as linking GPS to precision-guided bombs and missiles ...like those being used in Iraq.

On March 18th, Rep. Fred Upton (R.-Mich.), introduced legislation which provides funding of the cost to move government agencies to new spectrum. H.R. 1320, the 'Commercial Enhancement Act,' would create a trust fund that would be used by government agencies to cover their relocation costs.

The auctioned spectrum would then be used by private wireless carriers for new

advanced services ...such as Third Generation Wireless phones for consumers. "3G" is intended to provide broadband internet access for portable devices.

Under Upton's bill, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA manages the radio spectrum used by Federal government agencies), would provide a cost estimate and timeframe for reassigning the spectrum to the FCC prior to auction.

The FCC then will hold its auction, but cannot close until the bidding equals at least 110 percent of the estimated relocation cost.

Once the auction is complete, the winning bidder's money will be placed in a newly created 'Spectrum Relocation Trust Fund' and relocating agencies will draw from those funds until the relocation is complete and fully paid for.

"This is good news for taxpayers who will not have to pay to relocate government agencies to new spectrum," Upton said.

The ban on online sales taxes is likely to be extended. The House Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law held hearings March 26th on the question of applying taxes to online sales. States are currently barred from collecting sales tax on retailers not within their borders.

A 1992 Supreme Court decision forbids states from unfairly taxing catalog, telephone and other "remote" sales. States must first align their sales tax codes before they can start collecting sales taxes from out-of-state vendors.

The goal of the original 1998 Internet Tax Freedom Act, later renamed the Internet Tax Nondiscrimination Act, is to shelter the developing online industry from local and regional taxes. The current tax moratorium ends on November 1, 2003.

The Federation of Tax Administrators (FTA) believe electronic commerce has matured to the point where it no longer deserves preferential treatment. The FTA said any reauthorized ban should be limited to just five more years.

The latest bill doesn't make the Internet an entirely tax-free zone. It merely prohibits states and localities from imposing multiple and discriminatory taxes on Internet sales. There are currently over 7,500 taxing jurisdictions and each with its own system of rates and rules.

Pressure has been mounting, as states

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face budget crunches due to the slow economy. They say billions in online sales taxes went uncollected last year ...an amount that studies say could grow to \$45 billion by 2006.

A task force of the National Conference of State Legislators have drafted a model universal tax code bill that would apply equal tax rates to online commerce across the U.S.

The Streamlined Sales Tax Project is aimed at simplifying the tax rates and deciding on which goods and services are subject to taxation. No one knows how long it will take for all states to adopt the process and another sales tax ban on online sales seems assured.

The U.S. Air Force Space Command successfully launched a new GPS (Global Positioning System) satellite aboard a Delta 2 rocket from Cape Canaveral on March 31st. And it is already providing service to U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf. The new satellite joins a constellation of 27 GPS satellites criss-crossing in orbit 12,700 miles above the Earth.

GPS systems provide precision position location data in longitude, latitude and elevation and are primarily used by the military. They are being used to guide 1,000 to 2,000 pound JDAM (joint direct attack munition) precision bombs and Tomahawk cruise missiles. They also help troops orient themselves.

The ACLU is up in arms over new legislation, nicknamed "Patriot II," being drafted by the U.S. Dept. of Justice that expands the surveillance and anti-terrorism provisions allowed under the U.S.A. Patriot Act, signed into law by President Bush on Oct. 26, 2001.

A new Section 301 of the "Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003" provides for the creation of a "Terrorist Identification Database" ...a DNA database on "suspected terrorists," which would include people who associate with suspected terrorist groups, non-citizens suspected of certain crimes or of having supported any group designated as terrorist.

Section 501 of the bill provides for the "involuntary denationalization" (loss of citizenship) of Americans who support the activities (even the legal activities) of any organization that the executive branch has deemed "terrorist."

The FBI and the Justice Dept. also wants the telecom industry to create tech-

nical standards that facilitate surveillance (wiretapping) so that emerging services such as phone calls made over the Internet will not become a safe haven for criminals and terrorists.

The FCC has fined WebNet Communications of McLean, Virginia \$1.2 million for "slamming" ...illegally switching consumers' long-distance telephone service without permission.

The FCC and 14 state agencies began investigating the company in 2001 after receiving consumer complaints. The case was the first joint effort between federal and state authorities against a company accused of slamming.

AMATEUR RADIO

The Wireless Institute of Australia has decided that a new entry level Amateur Radio license is needed. The decision, reached at the WIA Federal Convention held in Adelaide, April 4-6, "...is to make Amateur Radio more attractive and assessable for a greater number of people."

Motion 020901A unanimously agreed to by all VK districts specifies "That it be WIA policy that it seek implementation of an Entry Level License with access to a majority of bands to the determined, all modes with low power, to facilitate entry into the Amateur Radio Service."

WIA Federal President, Ernie Hocking VK1LK said that the decision to seek an Entry Level Licence would result in a secure future for amateur radio in Australia.

An initial motion that the new license have "all bands", was rescinded when it was argued that all bands were not appropriate for the introduction of an entry level license.

The WIA will now consult with the Australian amateur radio fraternity on its policy, before going to the ACA (Australian Communications Authority) with a detailed request that an Entry Level License be introduced as soon as possible.

The WIA also supports a two-tier license system in Australia, an Unrestricted license, and an Entry Level License. (WIA News Release)

Nominations are being sought for the 2003 Newsline "Young Ham

of The Year Award" This award program, now in its second decade, is presented annually to an FCC-licensed radio-amateur who is 18 years of age or younger and who has provided outstanding service to the nation, his community or the betterment of the state of the communications art through the Amateur Radio Service.

All nominations must be submitted before May 30, 2003 on an official application and accompanied by verification materials. Applications are available (1.) for a self addressed stamped envelope mailed to the 2003 Young Ham of the Year Award, 28197 Robin Ave., Santa Clarita, CA 91350, (2.) by downloading from: <www.arnewsline.org> or (3.) by filing online at: <www.yhotoy.org/2003.htm>.

The award presentation will take place this summer at the 2003 Huntsville Hamfest. Corporate sponsorship for the "Young Ham of the Year Award" program is provided by Yaesu USA and CQ Magazine.

Amateur Radio Operators Ready to Assist in Iraqi War is the title of a feature story carried April 1st in the Norristown (PA) Reporter newspaper. It said, "Despite advances in technology, amateur radio is not necessarily a thing of the past." It told about how ham operators "...are waiting for the opportunity to convey messages to the military, emergency personnel and average citizens if existing equipment fails."

"Despite advances in computer technology, the use of e-mail for quick and free communication and the heavy use of cellular telephones, amateur radio operators are still serving as a backup communication provider for the Department of Defense, civilian authorities and the conveyor of messages between military personnel and their family and friends."

"During the Gulf War in 1991, the Military Affiliate Radio System was involved in exchanging free MARSgrams and two-way contacts between service personnel and their families. It's different now. The troops are moving along so quickly ...you can't set up an antenna unless you have more of a static situation."

Utah Gov Michael Leavitt signed HB 79, "Regulation of Amateur Radio Antennas" into law on March 15. It prohibits municipalities and counties in Utah from enacting ordinances

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that fail to comply with the limited federal preemption known as PRB-1. The measure requires local ordinances involving placement, screening or height of an Amateur Radio antenna that are based on health, safety or aesthetics to "reasonably accommodate amateur radio communications" and to "represent the minimal practicable regulation to accomplish the municipality's purpose." It becomes effective May 5. According to the ARRL, Utah becomes the 17th state to enact an Amateur Radio antenna bill.

The ARRL has launched a fund-raising campaign to help generate funds needed to continue the defense of Amateur Radio spectrum. The League says "...several issues before this summer's World Radiocommunication Conference 2003 affect amateurs, such as the Amateur Radio/International Broadcasting overlap on 40 meters and the desire of commercial interests to expand their slices of spectrum. ...so-called 'Little LEO' satellites are also on the WRC-03 agenda, and decisions on these issues could affect amateur spectrum."

A secure website has been set up at to solicit contributions before May 30 from the amateur community at <<https://www.arrl.org/forms/fdefense/fdefense.html>>. Almost 2000 delegates from nearly every country in the world will take part in the conference scheduled for Geneva June 9 through July 4.

It is starting to look like there will be "no change" at WRC-03 to the HF Broadcasting/Amateur Radio sharing at 7100-7300 kHz (40 meters.)

Several options are being considered, most have HF Broadcasters in ITU Region 1 and 3 moving to above 7300 kHz (either 7300-7450 or 7300-7550) leaving an exclusive Amateur allocation at 7000 to 7300 kHz.

Many countries are saying that they heavily use frequencies above 7300 and can not accommodate HF Broadcasting moving up the band.

Poland is the latest to get the 50 MHz band and will be a sought after "new one" by the DX community.

The IARU radio society PZK (Polski Zwiazek Krotkofalowcow) reports that SP radio amateurs can only use 6-meters as a secondary allocation shared with government radio services.

PZK also advises that the new Polish national radio frequency allocation table also gives that country's radio amateurs access to 136 kHz in line with a growing trend of amateur radio gaining a low frequency band. (Thanks: WIA)

FCC Amateur Radio Enforcement

Dave Every, KD7QAS (Boise, ID) has been directed to contact the FCC relative to his alleged operation without a license on 26.350, 27.420 and 27.700 MHz, using SSB and SSTV. Unlicensed radio operation "...will subject you to a fine ...normally range from \$7,500 to \$10,000 [and will] also lead to revocation proceedings against your Amateur license," FCC warned.

Similar warnings were also issued to John F. Hail, KD7QAW and Tom M. Sjoberg, KD7RCS also from Boise, ID.

Harvey J. Estes (New Port Richey FL) has been notified by the FCC relative to harmful radio interference being caused by his electric fence to Amateur radio operator, Wilbert Kollenbaum, K4XS. His electric provider, Florida Power Corporation, has verified that the electric fence is the source of the radio interference. The FCC pointed out that the operation of an "incidental radiator" may not cause interference to an authorized radio station.

The rules provide that "The operator of the radio frequency device shall be required to cease operating the device upon notification by a Commission representative that the device is causing harmful interference. Operation shall not resume until the condition causing the harmful interference has been corrected."

K4XS has attempted unsuccessfully to resolve the electric fence problem with Mr. Estes who has now been directed to correct the interference within a 60 day time period. "...unresolved problems may be a violation of FCC rules and could result in a monetary fine," FCC said.

Gerald Hendershott (Boring, OR) was also sent a similar letter. His electric fence is interfering with the Amateur radio operations of Larry Tyree, N6TR ...also of Boring, OR.

Dave K. Childers, N8QGI (Eastlake, OH) has been contacted by the FCC relative to the transmission of "obscene or indecent words or language" December 14, 2002 on CB Chan-

nel 13, 27.1150 MHz. Childers has been directed to respond in writing to the complaint and transmission (which was recorded) within 20 days. "The response you submit will be used to determine what enforcement action to take in this matter."

Anthony L. Basile, N3HFB (Cherrytree, PA) has been warned by the FCC for "deliberately interfering with the N3HAO (147.39 MHz), KE3DR (146.655 MHz) and N3QC (146.865 MHz) repeater systems in your area. The interference has consisted, among other things, of keying the repeater repeatedly without communications." Continued such incidents will subject Mr. Basile to license revocation as well as a large fine. "We note that your license is due for renewal in September 2003. Until this matter is resolved, your license will not be routinely renewed."

Drew B. Feldman, KG6PFC (Los Angeles, CA) a new Technician Class operator had his license terminated on March 20th "based upon complaints about the operation of your station." He will shortly be required to submit additional information to the FCC so that a decision can be made on his application.

David L. Price, WA6FUL (San Jose, CA) was issued a letter on February 13, 2003 by the District Director of the San Francisco office removing the automatic control privileges from his Amateur license. He was told that his Amateur station was under review by the Enforcement Bureau for apparent rule violations "...including failure to identify and transmitting false call signs."

Price now advises that his repeater has been repaired and reprogrammed with the proper call sign. The FCC is now asking that it be furnished within 20 days "...copies of all work orders, invoices or other documents related to the service and repair of the repeater."

Erin J. Rourke, N0KCN (Fargo, ND) has been formally warned by the FCC for "...deliberately interfering with the KC0SD repeater system on 146.060 MHz in the Fargo area. The interference has consisted of unidentified transmissions, tones and playing music." Rourke's license will be revoked and he will be fined if the interference continues.

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International Space Station to Fly Short-Handed

Since the U.S. shuttle fleet is grounded indefinitely, the Russian Soyuz and Progress craft have become the only means of sending up astronauts and cosmonauts ...and re-supplying the orbiting station. It will mean a broader role for Russia.

Until the cause of Columbia crash is established, expansion of the space station has been put on hold because only shuttles are big enough to hoist new construction pieces. It also means that plans to transport new ham gear to the ISS has been postponed.

Scrapped for funds, Russia has been lobbying the U.S. to pay additional cash to help keep the manned-space operation running. Russia did get another \$95 million from its government which kept the manned space program from being 'moth-balled' this year. Additional funding is still needed in the future to keep the station permanently operating. But due to the Russian arms shipments to the Middle East, the U.S. says it will not pay a bigger share of the cost. NASA also contends that last year Russia did not carry out all the launches it signed up to make and should now simply make up the shortfall.

Since it was first inhabited in 2000, the station has always been manned by three-man permanent crews of Russians and Americans. The current crew consists of two U.S. astronauts and a Russian cosmonaut who have been in orbit since November.

The next crew was due to be changed out in March aboard the Shuttle Atlantis shuttle. The return is now scheduled aboard a Russian Soyuz spacecraft lifting off on April 26 from Kazakhstan. The mission, however, could be postponed until May. The three-man "Expedition 7" crew has been reduced by NASA to only two to ease the job of resupplying the craft until the shuttle fleet with its larger cargo capacity returns to active duty.

Edward Lu, KC5WKJ, a physicist and astronomer, and Yuri Malenchenko, RK3DUP, a pilot and engineer are scheduled to stay aboard the ISS for about six months. Alexander Kaleri, U8MIR (originally planned for the crew) and NASA astronaut Mike Foale, KB5UAC, have been named as back-ups. All four are training in Russia.

It will be the second time that Lu, 39, and Malenchenko, 41, have flown to the space station. Three years ago, both teamed up for a spacewalk to hook up exterior cables. Lu, the son of Chinese-born parents, is an expert on solar flares.

The two will spend nearly a week at the space station before the current residents, Americans Kenneth Bowersox, KD5JDP, Donald Pettit, KD5MDT and Russian Nikolai Budarin, RV3FB, head for home. The three will return to Earth in early May aboard the Soyuz capsule presently docked at the station. The Soyuz craft that ferries Lu and Malechenko to the ISS will remain tethered to the space station in the event it is needed as an emergency life raft.

The ARRL reports that ARISS (Amateur Radio

aboard the International Space Shuttle) school group contacts will continue at the rate of one or two school per week.

United Kingdom to End Individual CB Licensing and to Eventually Withdraw the 40 UK-only CB Channels

The United Kingdom's Radiocommunications Agency (or RA, as it is known) is the federal agency in Great Britain that is responsible for regulating telecommunications. On March 25th, the UK proposed to eliminate 40 of their 80 Citizens' Band (CB) channels effective on June 30, 2010. Comments on the proposal close on June 18, 2003.

All CB operators must be licensed in the UK and an annual license currently costs £15 (about \$24) but is free to CBers aged under 21 years or over 75 years. Forty of the eighty CB channels are UK-specific channels. The other 40 are so-called "Pan-European channels."

A Communications Bill before Parliament maintains that a radio license should not be issued unless there is good reason based on interference grounds. A Conference of European Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT is the European telecom authority) decision has suggested that European states exempt all such services from licensing. The UK says removal of the need for individual licensing will eliminate form-filling, expense and delay in operating a CB radio. There will be no changes in the CB regulations.

At its peak, there were 300,000 CB licenses in Great Britain. Today, however, use of the CB radio frequencies has declined to under 24,000 and retention of all 80 channels is no longer justified.

The RA estimates that the number of CB licenses will fall to 20,800 next year and "If the annual 10% rate of decline continues, there will be around 10,400 licenses (a 96.5% reduction from the peak total) by 2010."

When the 40 UK-only channels are removed, some CB users will have to obtain new equipment. To prevent a major inconvenience, the RA is giving seven years' notice of the closure ...now scheduled for June 30, 2010. "Monitoring has shown that many channels remain unused for most of the time, and indicate that congestion would not occur even if only 40 channels were available."

The UK is proposing to eliminate individual CB licensing effective July 1, 2004. The technical and operating rules will continue to apply and will be enforced following deregulation.

The forty UK-only CB channels begin at 27.60125 MHz and are spaced every 10 kHz to 27.99125 ...just below the amateur ten meter band. The European CB channel line-up begins at 26.965 and extends to 27.405 MHz ...the same as in the U.S.

"If these proposals are implemented, from July 2004 the CB radio service will be license-exempt (no annual license fee), initially with 80 channels and, from 2010, with 40 channels," the RA said.

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PASSIVE RADAR/LASER JAMMERS DON'T WORK!

Back on February 12, 1997, the FCC issued an official citation to Rocky Mountain Radar, Inc., located near Denver, advising the firm that its Spirit II so-called passive radar jammer violated rules relating to the manufacture and marketing of devices that interfere with radio transmissions.

Passive jammers claim to jam radar by receiving the inbound microwave beam, mixing with it some white noise, then reflecting the altered signal back to the radar gun, so confusing it that no speed is displayed. They differ from radar detector in that they give no audible warning in the presence of police radar. A radar scrambler theoretically disables radar/lidar to give the driver time to adjust speed if needed.

Rocky Mountain Radar responded to the FCC by saying that its radar jammer was not an intentional radiator and was exempt from any equipment authorization rules since it did not radiate a signal between 9 kHz and 3,000 GHz.

The FCC determined otherwise and said that the intended purpose of the device was to intentionally interfere with licensed police communications. Rocky Mountain filed for a stay (postponement) of the decision arguing (1.) the FCC had no jurisdiction over devices that cannot emit RF energy, (2.) that they would "sustain irreparable financial injury," (3.) it was up to each state, rather than the FCC, to determine whether the radar-jammer presents any harm to the public or public safety and (4.) limiting governmental conduct to existing rules and laws is in the public interest.

The FCC said that their authority extends to "devices which in their operation are capable of emitting radio frequency energy by radiation, conduction, or other means in sufficient degree to cause harmful interference to radio communications" adding that the device "is designed to function only when it is illuminated by a police radar signal. When the device is in operation, it uses a source of RF energy to itself generate a new RF signal and emit that signal into space to cause interference."

An order adopted December 4, 1997 held "...that the Spirit II, and any other similar device" meets the definition of an intentional radiator, must not be sold without equipment authorization and its use is considered "malicious interference." Before this ruling, passive radar jammers were not considered transmitters and thus not covered by FCC regulations.

That was five years ago. Passive jammers were invented by Mike Churchman, owner of Rocky Mountain Radar and the firm still manufactures them. The Spirit II was one of the first units manufactured by Rocky Mountain Radar and is no longer available. But subsequent models are indeed still marketed.

Contrary to what the FCC says, he still insists they are legal arguing that "Since our jammers do not transmit, we can disregard the sections on transmitters." Rocky Mountain says their jammers are legal everywhere except California, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Utah, Virginia and Washington D.C.

Even if legal, do they work?

Rocky Mountain Radar says their passive reflector-jammer makes your car invisible to police radar and laser guns by mixing a portion of an X, K or Ka radar signal with an FM "chirp." It is then "...bounced back to the squad car by way of a waveguide antenna, effectively confusing the computer inside the radar gun." Because police radar can't verify the speed, it displays no speed at all. The gadget supposedly "...uses light-emitting diodes (LEDs) to fire invisible infrared pulses through the windshield."

Rocky Mountain Radar has many different jammer models sporting such names as Phantom, Black Widow, Phazer, Shadow, Eclipse, Mirage and Spirit to name a few. Some cost more than \$300.

Passive radar jammers have been extensively tested. RadarBusters.com is a website operated by Roy Reyer, an ex-law enforcement officer who is also a certified traffic radar instructor. They do not recommend the various passive radar and laser jammers manufactured by Rocky Mountain Radar because "...we have never found one unit to work."

Here is a quote from www.radartest.com , "Barring a major rewrite of some of the basic laws of physics, there's no way these devices will ever jam radar or lasers."

www.troubleshooter.com set up a test at Bandimere Speedway at Thunder Mountain near Denver with police observers. "I can tell you without a doubt -- the jammers did not work at all! They did not jam radar, confuse radar, block radar, scramble radar, nor did they render a car invisible to radar. The same goes with police lasers: the jammers had no affect."

Speed Measurement Laboratories was asked by several magazines to test laser jammers. According to www.laseradar.com, Rocky Mountain Radar units had no jamming affect on laser guns what-so-ever!

Another website: www.radarone.com has this to say: "Whether it be a Phantom, Phazer, Teleradar, Spirit, Mirage, they all have one thing in common, they don't seem to jam radar. [They have] to generate enough energy to overcome, override or dominate all other returned or incoming signals. Passive jammers do not, and will never, meet this requirement!"

And from www.radartest.com. "We've tested these products a dozen times against every front-line police radar gun and laser, finding all of them utterly worthless. ...despite the fact that Rocky Mountain Radar's wares now appear in reputable mail-order catalogs, complete with promises of ticket refunds, they simply don't work."

More results. Heather Sullivan, a reporter for WZVN-TV, the ABC station in Naples, FL, got together with a local sheriff's deputy to test the Phazer II and concluded that it does not work. And the LA Times (Feb. 26, 2003) reported similar results by a Michigan State University engineering professor who conducted a test for the Insurance Institute.

Unless all these tests are wrong, which we doubt, passive radar jammers are a multi-million dollar fraud.